



Attorney General Jon Bruning

NEWS RELEASE

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Consumer Alert: Bruning Warns Nebraskans Not to Buy Into Mystery Shopper Scams

LINCOLN – Attorney General Jon Bruning today issued an alert for consumers over a mystery shopper scam involving falsified U.S. Postal Service money orders.

Consumers who responded to mystery shopper advertisements have received what appears to be a genuine U.S. Postal Service money order. They are then instructed to deposit the money order in their personal account, perform some “mystery shopping” at a given store and then wire the majority of the funds to another party.

“In this economy, it may be tempting to respond to these offers as a way to make some extra money,” Bruning said. “Unfortunately, the only person who makes money in these scams is the criminal.”

Mystery shoppers are “hired” to evaluate the customer service of a money transfer company. Victims are given a money order to deposit in their personal bank account then told to withdraw the amount in cash and wire the money using a certain money transfer service. Later when the money order bounces, the victim is responsible for the money they withdrew and wired away.

In this case the money order is real, but it has been doctored to a much greater amount. A fraudster purchases a \$50 money order and then alters the amount to read a larger sum, such as \$950. It is only when the code on the money order is scanned that the original \$50 amount is revealed.

Victims are then left responsible for the money that was sent via wire transfer. The recipients of these funds are generally overseas, where locating and recovering the funds is almost impossible.

To help prevent people from becoming victims, the U.S. Postal Service will check any postal money order for free at any location.

The Federal Trade Commission offers other tips to avoid becoming a victim.

Never send money to:

- A stranger — in this country or anywhere else.
- Someone claiming to be a relative in a crisis — and who wants to keep their request for money a secret.
- Someone who says a money transfer is the only form of payment that's acceptable.
- Someone who asks you to deposit a check and send some of the money back.

Anyone who thinks they may have been a victim of a mystery shopper scam should contact the Attorney General's Office at 800-727-6432 or on the Web at ago.ne.gov.

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